

406. Then, you are alive to the fact that you are responsible for everything that takes place in the office in connection with the business of the office?—Unquestionably so.

407. Can you find time to give that proper supervision to the book-keeping of the office that should be given to it, looking at your other duties?—No, sir, I cannot. Perhaps it would not be wrong for me to state here that ever since I have been appointed Public Trustee the labour on myself has been extreme, excessive, and it would be perfectly out of the question my attempting to supervise more than I do at present.

408. Then, will you kindly state how your time is occupied?—Every letter which comes into the office, after being recorded, goes to the Ledger-keepers. They make their entries in their books, and give me such information on the face of the record as will enable me to grasp the thing without undue reference to former papers. With the exception of a few formal matters, every letter received comes before me for direction what action is to be taken, and it is in the giving of those directions and considering what action should be taken that my time is taken up.

409. I suppose you are engaged very closely a great many hours every day?—I think it would be safe in me to say that there is never ten minutes of any day that is not very closely given to the working of the office from 9 to 5, and very often later.

410. Have you been able to overtake the work devolving upon you, as you have been practising it, during those working-hours, or have you found it necessary to work in the evenings?—Often—very frequently indeed. I have been obliged either to take work home or to return to the office.

411. Have you had much night-work?—Before Mr. Wilson was appointed it was constant, but since his appointment he has taken what I may term the legal business entirely out of my hands, and I have been relieved to a very large extent.

412. But in order to overtake the work you have still to work during the evenings?—Yes.

413. Do you think it would be desirable, if your time permitted, to occasionally visit different parts of the colony where the Public Trust Office is doing, or is likely to do, business?—It is very desirable it should be so; but there is one very great difficulty on that head, and that is, I am advised a meeting of the Board cannot take place without my presence. Now, on three or four occasions when I have been absent from Wellington it has happened that deeds of a more or less important nature have come in for execution from various solicitors. In consequence of my presence being necessary at every Board meeting these deeds, of necessity, have had to be held over until my return, and dissatisfaction has been engendered in consequence of that delay. Naturally, therefore, my visits to places outside of Wellington are made as short as possible, and I have not found myself enabled to spend the time at distant parts of New Zealand which it is very desirable the head of such a department as this should spend there.

414. You have told us that your time is very fully occupied during office-hours, between 9 and 5. Now, supposing you had not the hindrance of the Board or Boards to which you have before alluded, would you then have been able to have paid those visits, looking at the duties that you have recounted to us which you have to attend to here at the Head Office?—I think I should have been enabled to arrange that the Solicitor and the Chief Clerk should have performed such duties—almost all my duties. There are some they could not do. But I could have arranged with them to carry on the office during more protracted visits than I have been enabled to make. What I mean is this: that I think I should have been enabled, with the assistance of the Solicitor and Chief Clerk, to have been away from Wellington for longer periods than I have been.

415. The business of the Public Trust Office you find increasing almost daily?—That is so.

416. Have you occasions daily to be interviewed by people?—Very largely so.

417. Then, under those circumstances, I presume it is desirable, on the other hand, apart from your visiting the country, that you should be about as much as possible in your office?—Yes, it is so.

418. So that, while it is desirable that periodical visits should be paid by the head of the Public Trust Office to different parts of the colony, it is also desirable that the head of the office should be continually about?—No doubt.

419. Was that running in your mind when you made the suggestions you did to the Treasurer in reference to appointing a Commission or Deputy?—Well, the main idea I had in my head then was the saving of delay caused by the weekly meeting of the Board; and, further, the benefit of consultation which three men would have in directing the affairs of the office.

420. Three men would be a large number for an establishment like this, with co-ordinate powers. Would two not answer?—Two would no doubt answer; but in my recommendation I had the idea of one of those three carrying on the legal business of the office, and the other two managing the financial and commercial branches of the institution.

421. Then you say that under present circumstances it is impossible for you to give that daily attention, or weekly attention, which is necessary to the books and general working of the office?—That is so.

422. In looking through the cash-books, I notice that you stamp your initials and name, as occasions may require, on the folios?—Yes.

423. That—I mean your signature—I apprehend, is required by the Act—that you should sign your name?—That is so.

424. What does the Act say?—Section 34 of “The Public Trust Office Act, 1872,” says,—

The Public Trustee shall keep a cash account-book, in which shall be entered each day all receipts into and payments out of the Public Trustee's Account, in the order in which they severally occur, and at the close of business on each day the Public Trustee shall sign the said book, and send it to the Commissioners of Audit. And the said Commissioners shall forthwith compare the said book with the bank pass-book, and if any discrepancy appear which is not explained to their satisfaction they shall forthwith report thereon to the Colonial Treasurer.

425. Of course, I see there is nothing in that Act which requires you, before signing the book, to see that the cash-book is ruled off, the summations made, and the balances brought down?—There is nothing.